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Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy Charges Former DPD Sergeant in Five Sexual Assault Cases

On March 19, 2026, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy charged former Detroit Police Sergeant Benjamin Wagner, 68, of Greenville, North Carolina in five Kidnapping and Criminal Sexual Assault felony cases with victims who were between the ages of 15 and 23 at the time of their assaults.

"This case is illustrative of a multi-year journey to justice. Collaboration, patience, determination, and a focus on our survivors was key here. We are a victim centered, trauma informed, and offender focused office. Our survivors were between the ages of 15 and 23 when they were attacked and sexually assaulted. This case is especially disturbing to us because the evidence will show that a then Detroit Police officer is the rapist of the young women and girls in the cases that we charge today.

"If you believe that you have been sexually assaulted by former Sergeant Wagner, please contact the Detroit Police Department Sex Crimes Unit at 313-596-1950 and request to speak with Sergeant Jennifer Carlson," said Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy.

"This arrest proves what can happen when law enforcement agencies work together and refuse to let time or status of an individual stand in the way of justice. I am grateful to my team at FBI Detroit for using advanced forensic technology to assist our partners with the Wayne County Sexual Assault Kit Task Force in their investigation, which assisted in identifying the suspect. The dedicated investigative work of the FBI Charlotte Field Office, under the leadership of Special Agent in Charge Reid Davis, working alongside the Greenville Police Department (North Carolina), was critical in coordinating and carrying out the arrest.

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We appreciate and commend the work of Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office in bringing charges in this case. The FBI stands ready to support their efforts as this matter moves forward," said Jennifer Runyan, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Detroit Field Office.

"The evidence found in this case concerning former DPD Sergeant, Benjamin Wagner, is egregious and disturbing," said Detroit Police Chief Todd A. Bettison. "It represents a deep betrayal to the oath us officers take as a symbol of public faith, as it violates the trust placed in law enforcement. Mr. Wagner's actions do not represent the integrity, values or mission held by the officers of the Detroit Police Department."

Chief Bettison said, "The work done in this case by our officers shows the true example of what I mean when I say the men and women of the Detroit Police Department are truly dedicated to the work that they do. I want to personally thank the dedicated Sergeant who is the Officer in Charge of this case who is assigned to our Sex Crimes Unit, who works closely with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office's Sexual Assault Kit Team. Cold cases are oftentimes some of the most difficult cases to solve because they require years of persistence, careful reviews of evidence and most importantly, an unwavering commitment to justice. The work done by this team reflects this dedication, and I am pleased with the charging decision by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Summary of Cases

From 1989 through 2017, Defendant Benjamin Wagner, 68, was employed at the Detroit Police Department as a police officer. During that time, he was also promoted to sergeant. While employed as a law enforcement officer, Wagner led a double life. It is alleged that he sexually assaulted young women and girls on the northwest side of Detroit. At the time of the assaults, the defendant lived on Bentler Street. All of the assaults took place within approximately 5.5 miles from his Detroit home.

The defendant began his employment with the Detroit Police Department in 1989. He worked in various locations within the Detroit Police Department including, but not limited to: The 10th and 2nd Precincts, Investigative Operations, Tactical Services Unit, Criminal Investigations, and Commercial Auto Theft Unit (CATS). Following his retirement, Wagner moved to North Carolina in 2017 and was working as an employee of the Greenville airport.

A Then 17-Year-Old Female Victim, Location: Chalfonte Street and Mark Twain Street, Detroit, 48227

On November 10, 1999, after her work shift ended, the victim took a bus to a stop near the home of a friend and began walking. It is alleged that the defendant approached her, pointed a gun at her, ordered her from the scene, and sexually assaulted her.

Benjamin Wagner has been charged with one count of Kidnapping, one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Penis in Vagina), one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Fellatio), and one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Anal). * All of these charges are life offenses.

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A Then 23-Year-Old Female Victim, Location: The 18400 Block of Wyoming Avenue, Detroit, 48221

On January 31, 2000, the victim left her home to go to the store. As she was walking, it is alleged that Defendant Wagner walked toward her quickly and pointed a gun at her head. It is then alleged he ordered her from the scene and sexually assaulted her.

Benjamin Wagner has been charged with one count of Kidnapping, one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Penis in Vagina). * Both of these charges are life offenses.

A Then 15-Year-Old Female Victim, Location: The 19800 Block of Florence Street, Detroit, 48219

On September 28, 2000, the victim was on her way to school. As she was walking towards a bus stop, it is alleged that Defendant Wagner grabbed her arm and put a gun in her face. It is then alleged that he ordered her to move from the scene and sexually assaulted her.

Benjamin Wagner has been charged with one count of Kidnapping, one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Penis in Vagina), and one count of Third-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Person 13 to 15). * Kidnapping and First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct charges are life offenses.

A Then 20-Year-Old Female Victim, Location: The 8500 Block of W. McNichols Road, Detroit, 48221

On November 19, 2000, the victim was walking from her friend's home. It is alleged that Defendant Wagner walked past her and later attacked her from behind and put a gun to her back. It is further alleged that he removed her from the scene and sexually assaulted her.

Benjamin Wagner has been charged with one count of Kidnapping and one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Penis in Vagina). * Both of these charges are life offenses.

A Then 16-Year-Old Female Victim, The 19000 Block of Ferguson Street, Detroit, 48235

On April 15, 2003, the victim was walking to a bus stop to catch a bus to school. It is alleged that Defendant Wagner approached her after he came out of an alley and removed her from the scene. It is further alleged that he produced a handgun and sexually assaulted her.

Benjamin Wagner has been charged with one count of Kidnapping, one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Penis in Vagina), and one count of First-Degree Criminal Sexual Conduct (Fellatio). * All of these charges are life offenses.

Although it is alleged that a handgun was used in all of the cases, Felony Firearm offenses were not able to be charged in these cases because of the Statute of Limitations. There is a 6-year statute of limitations for the crime. The 6 years expired by the time Defendant Wagner moved to North Carolina in 2017.

More complete facts and evidence in these cases will be placed on the record in court at the time of the preliminary examination.

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In 2010, in Defendant Wagner's case, the Michigan State Police were able to link an unknown male to Detroit sexual assaults that occurred between 1999 through 2003. The male suspect was unknown to the victims and the suspect's DNA was not contained in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). In August 2023, the FBI Detroit Field Office received a report identifying an investigative lead to a potential suspect linked to these five sexual assault kits. The FBI continued work on this investigative lead. In March 2026, as a result of this continued investigation, Defendant Wagner was ultimately confirmed to be linked to all five sexual assault cases that have been charged today.

The Wayne County Sexual Assault Kit Task Force (WCSAKTF)

In 2009, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy's office discovered 11,341 sexual assault kits in a Detroit Police Department property storage facility. The kits, which were collected between 1984 and 2009, were never submitted for DNA testing. A sexual assault kit is the DNA taken from a victim's body after a sexual assault. Each one of the untested kits represents a man, woman or child who suffered a violent assault and underwent a lengthy and physically invasive evidentiary collection procedure in an effort to apprehend his or her assailant. If tested, a sexual assault kit can potentially identify an unknown assailant, affirm a victim's version of events, discredit a suspect's story and connect evidence to serial rapists. In contrast, an untested kit can often mean justice denied for victims.

Faced with 11,341 untested sexual assault kits, Prosecutor Worthy applied for, and received, a grant from the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the Department of Justice. Under the grant, a group of multi-disciplinary stakeholders, along with sexual assault researchers from Michigan State University, meet regularly to determine how thousands of sexual assault kits came to be warehoused, how to move forward and how to ensure that the problem does not happen again. Prosecutor Worthy is dedicated to ensuring that: every kit is tested, every case is investigated, and that a victim-centered approach to the investigation of sexual assault is implemented at a state and national level.

Arrest of the Defendant

Further investigative work conducted by WCSAKTF Detective Patrick Moug, the Greenville Police Department, FBI Detroit Field Office, and the FBI Charlotte Field Office led to the March 17, 2026, arrest of Defendant Wagner in Greenville, North Carolina. Wagner waived extradition to Michigan. He was arraigned and remanded to jail this morning in 36th District Court, before Magistrate Delphia Burton. The Probable Cause Conferences are scheduled for April 7, 2026, and the Preliminary Examinations are scheduled for April 14, 2026, before Judge Shawn Jacque.

Special thanks to our WCSAKTF Investigators including Lead Detective Pat Moug, Sgt. Jennifer Carlson of the Detroit Police Department's Sex Crimes Unit, WCSAKTF Det. Kevin Nance, Det. James Heberger, Det. Robert Engler, and the Michigan State Police. Also special thanks to our community partners at Avalon Healing Center.

The cases will be prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutors Carley Kocks and Elisabeth Moore.

If you believe you were sexually assaulted by the defendant, please report this to the Detroit Police Department Sex Crimes Unit at 313-596-1950 and request to speak to Sgt. Jennifer Carlson. Avalon Healing Center can be contacted for support and assistance at 313-964-9701.

*The charges are allegations and defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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